

## VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

### Biomaterial research at VTT- case nanocellulose

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Published: 06/02/2019

[Link to publication](#)

*Please cite the original version:*

Kangas, H. (2019). *Biomaterial research at VTT- case nanocellulose*. BIOFOR International 2019, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.



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**VTT**

**Biomaterial research  
@VTT  
- case nanocellulose**

**Heli Kangas  
Research Team Leader**

01/02/2019 VTT – beyond the obvious

## Background – importance in Finland

- § Forest products – paper & board, cellulose and timber- are among the most significant export items in Finland
- § The demand of graphical papers has steadily decreased
  - P&P companies in need of new initiatives
- § Research on **nanocellulose** started at VTT in 2008
  - Virtual Nanocellulose Centre between VTT – UPM – Aalto University
  - Customer project with Stora Enso on manufacturing concept
  - EU projects and national programmes on manufacturing and applications



# Nanocellulose development - Pre-commercial production launched in 2011

## UPM HAS STARTED PRE-COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION OF FIBRIL CELLULOSE

(UPM, Helsinki) – UPM has started pre-commercial production of fibril cellulose and is currently developing new fibril cellulose applications with industrial partners.

UPM started the fibril cellulose product development process in 2008. Pre-commercial production began this autumn at Otaniemi, Espoo, Finland. UPM is now able to provide samples of fibril cellulose for extensive customer testing. UPM's objective is to create the preconditions needed for industrial-scale production of fibril cellulose.

Fibril cellulose is part of UPM's renewal and our Biofore strategy. We are currently focusing on commercialising fibril cellulose. The first stage mainly consists of developing products used in paper and packaging materials and the concrete and paint industries. We are also looking for new partners to develop new applications," says Esa Laurinsilta, Director, UPM Fibril Cellulose.

The production process used by UPM for fibril cellulose is the result of the development. The fibres in the most finely grained products are fibrils, which are on the nano scale. The rougher products consist of micrometre fibres. UPM's objective is the results of the development work with comprehensive patents that cover the manufacture of fibril cellulose and the applications.

Fibril cellulose can be used in a wide range of applications. UPM's fibril cellulose provides new properties and design opportunities for traditional materials. It can be used to make products tougher, lighter or thinner, depending on the application.

When water is added to fibril cellulose, a strong gel structure is created. Therefore, fibril cellulose can be used in many industrial applications requiring high stabilisation capacity and high viscosity.

UPM's fibril cellulose has proved to be useful in several application tests over the past few years. "In October, we produced the first industrial-scale batch of speciality paper reinforced with fibril cellulose at the UPM Tervasaari mill," Laurinsilta says.

Laurinsilta stresses the importance of the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes) and the development of the new product: "Forty researchers at the Finnish Centre for Nanocellulose Technologies have developed fibril cellulose for UPM in cooperation with the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and Aalto University."

Development of industrial production with VTT

UPM

Stora Enso Packaging Newsletter 3/2011



## MFC is a real step forward in renewable materials

Stora Enso is building a pre-commercial plant at Imatra Mills in Finland for the production of microfibrillated cellulose (MFC). This new type of renewable material is intended to be used in unique fibre-based board products, barrier materials and other viable future applications. The production of MFC is a significant step forward in innovative renewable materials.

"We envision that fibre-based packaging enhanced with MFC can have excellent barrier properties that are suitable for both protection and printing but are manufactured from 100 percent recyclable material, with no fossil-based components," says Jukka Kilpeläinen, Senior Vice President of Stora Enso Group R&D.

MFC can be used as reinforcement in fibre-based packaging materials and in other materials because of its properties: good strength, bonding ability and slenderness. MFC may lead to the development of lighter and stronger materials and could increase the renewable content in Stora Enso's packaging solutions.

"Taking full advantage of the potential of MFC technology in fibre-based packaging materials requires making modifications to our current manufacturing processes and adaptations in other processes in the value chain, including efforts to develop the end-use experience of new products. This can now be studied carefully in full-scale conditions," says Jan Lill, Head of R&D and Innovation, Stora Enso Packaging.

MFC has been produced in laboratory environments since the 1980s, and several useful applications have been demonstrated. The challenge so far has been to lower its production costs to a level which would enable commercial usage.

The cost of the new microfibrillated cellulose technology, including the Imatra pre-commercial plant, is estimated at EUR 10 million. The plant is scheduled to start production by the end of 2011.

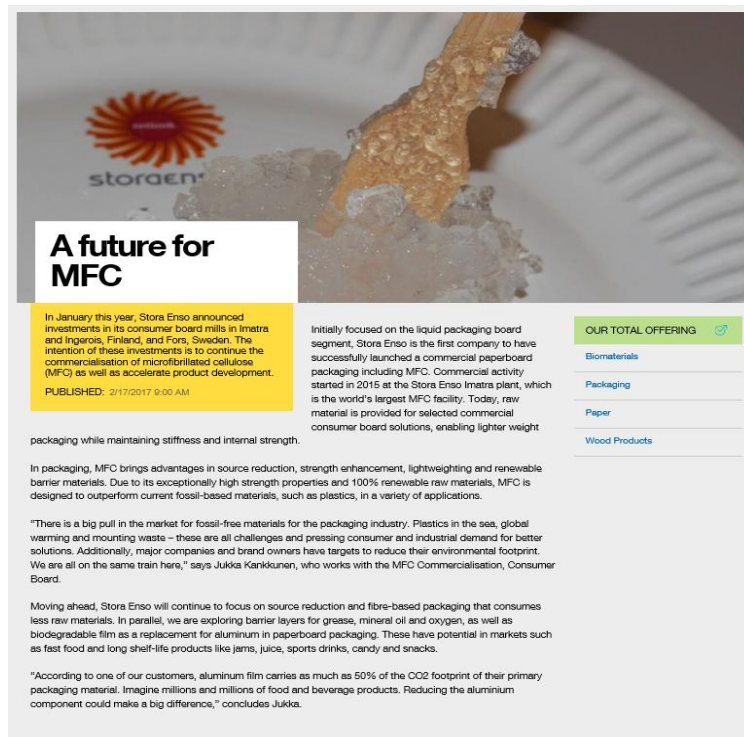
### Key facts

- MFC particles are about a thousand times larger than any nanocellulose particles. Microfibrillated cellulose particles do exist, for instance, in ordinary market pulp.
- Just like rope, which consists of longer and shorter threads, the cellulose fibre itself consists of fibrils and microfibrils. The microfibrils have a high degree of crystallinity and the mechanical properties are as strong as the glass fibres commonly used in epoxy-based advanced composites.
- In terms of their structural character, microfibrils are long in relation to their thickness, i.e. they have a high slenderness ratio, and even at a concentration of 2–4%, gel-like properties are observed, which makes it suitable as a consistency and flow regulator in many applications.

October 2011 | Board Paper

Stora Enso

# News on nanocellulose applications 2017



Source: Stora Enso

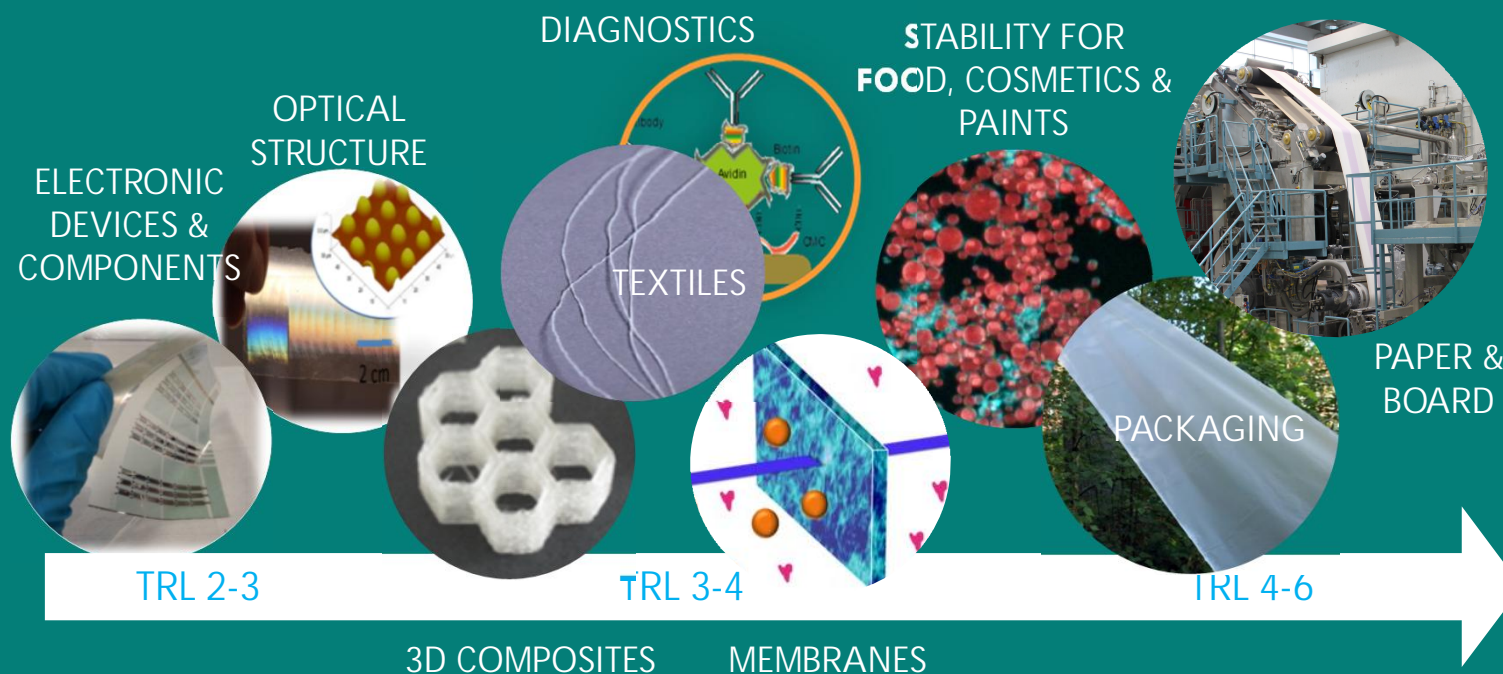


- Biofibrils are products based on micro- and nano-fibrillated cellulose which give liquid product formulations new rheological characteristics or strengthen material properties.
- [GrowDex®](#) is a novel wood-based cellulose nanofibril hydrogel for 3D cell culturing and other biomedical applications. It is highly biocompatible with human cells and tissues – but without any animal- or human-derived material.

Source: UPM



# Nanocellulose APPLICATIONS AT VARIOUS TRL LEVELS

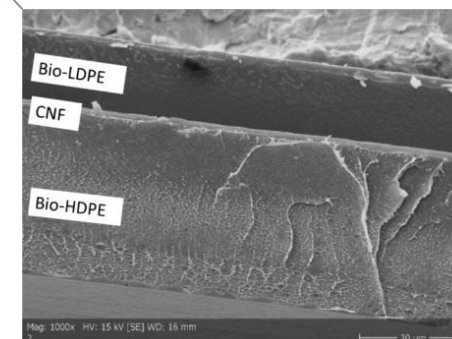
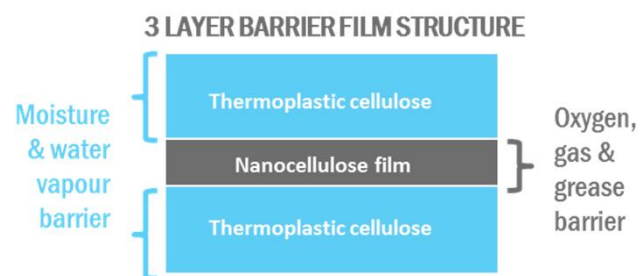




Bio-based stand-up pouch (SUP)



## BIO-BASED BARRIER SOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING



## Drivers for advanced biomaterials & nanomaterials



**EU bans single use  
plastics –  
potential alternatives  
from bio-based  
materials**



**Consumers prefer  
green solutions**



**Sustainable production**  
**Abundant raw material**  
**Utilisation of side  
streams**



**Biodegradability**  
**Compostability**



# Challenges for advanced biomaterials & nanomaterials

- § Use of forest must be balanced with their growth – limits for felling?
- § Forests are needed as carbon sinks – IPCC report on global warming
- § Recycling must be solved – biodegradation is not the priority
- § Brand owners banning multimaterials that are not recyclable
- § Need for investments if not processable with existing machinery
- § Properties vs. price

# NEW AND FUTURE INVESTMENTS

## **Metsä Group Äänekoski Bioproduct Mill**

- Production 1,3 Million tons of pulp/a, wood use 6,5 million m3/a, production started 2017
- Investment 1,4 billion€

## **Renewal of Metsä Group Kemi pulp mill, 900 million€**

- (Or building a new mill > 1 billion€), pre-study
- No investment decision yet

## **Boreal Bioref, Kemijärvi, building to be started summer 2018,**

- Production 0,5 million ton of pulp/a, wood use 2,8 million m3/a, to start 2020,
- Cost 950 million€
- Main owner Chinese Shanying

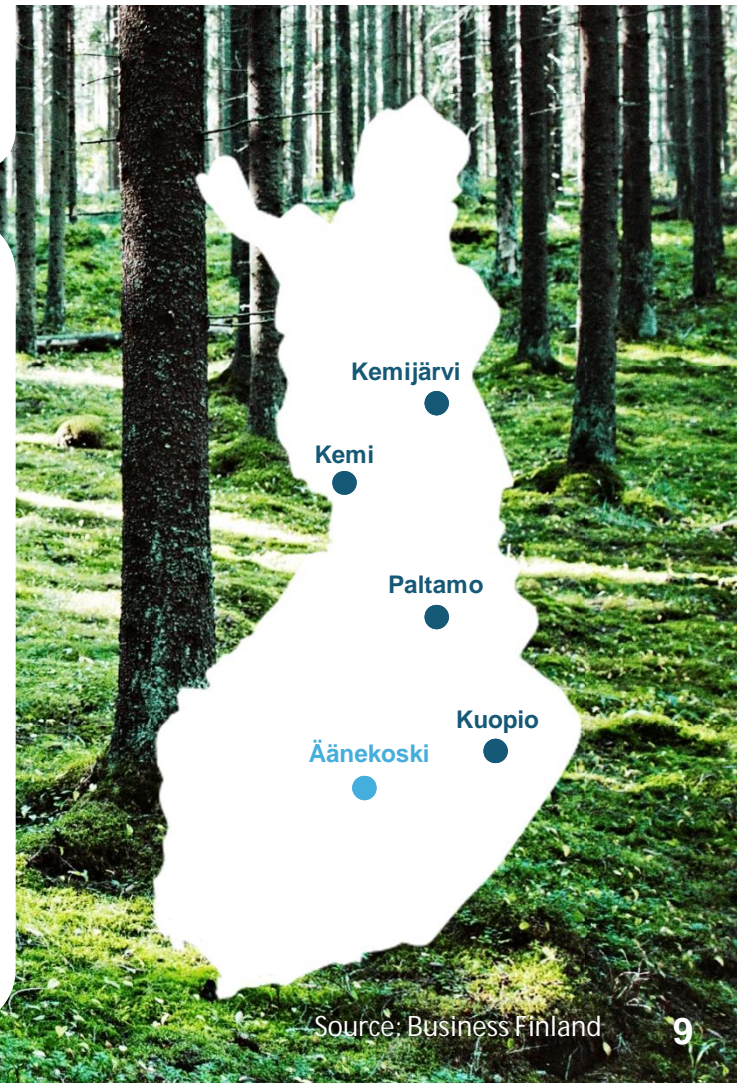
## **Finpulp, Kuopio, softwood pulp & bioproduct mill, planning started**

- Hengan International, tissue producer, as one of the minor stakeholders (investment 14 million€)
- Planned cost 1,4 billion€

## **Kaidi Biorefinery, Kemi, car biofuels**

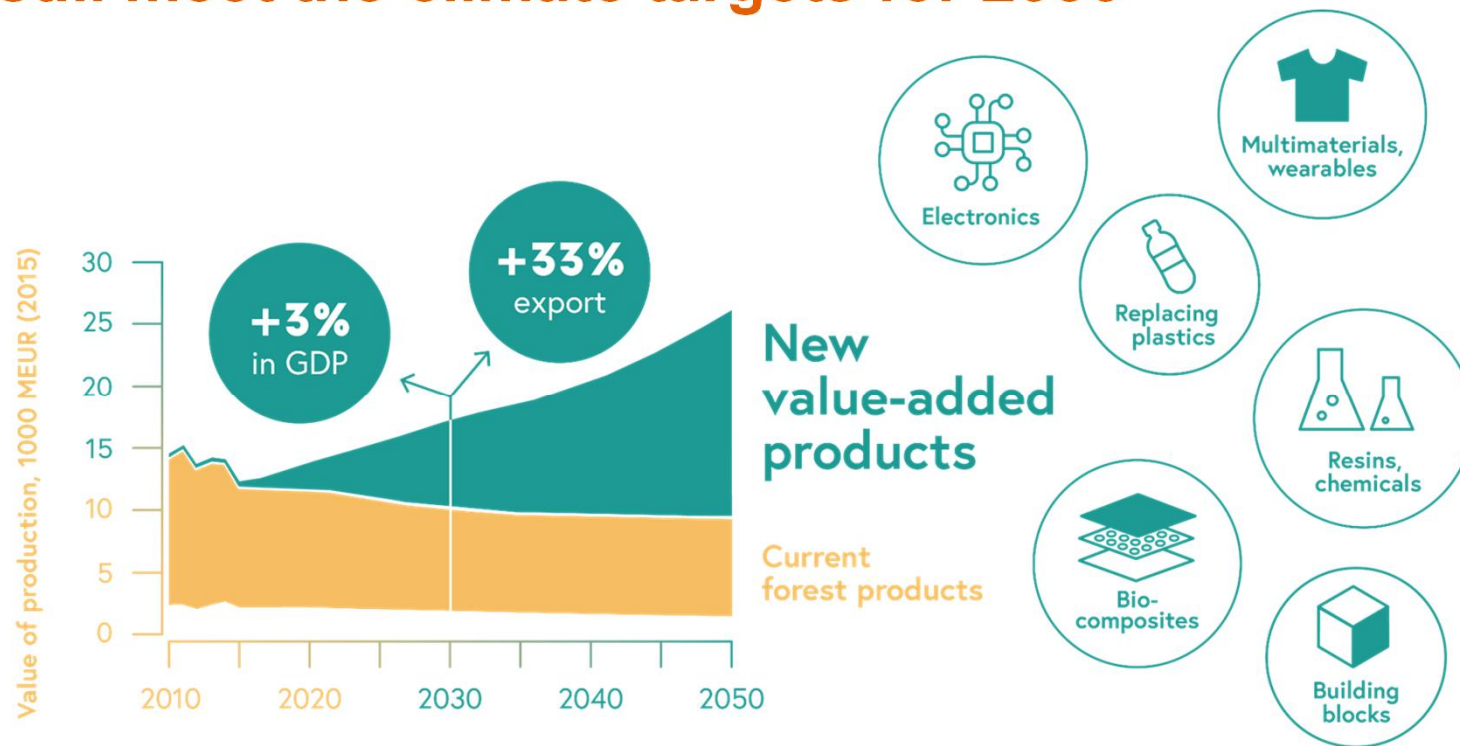
- Investment decision (900 million€) waits for environmental permits & new EU directive for renewal energy
- One of the owners private Chinese Sunshine Kaidi New Energy Group

**KaiCell Fibers** plans to build a new pulp mill to Paltamo, no investment decision yet



Source: Business Finland

# The value-added of forest industry can be doubled and still meet the climate targets for 2050



<http://www.vtt.fi/Pages/VTT-laati-kehityspolut-2050-ilmastotavoitteisiin--Suomen-kansantalous-hyrräämään-biotalousdella.aspx>